



## Abbey Gate College

### Remembrance Assembly 2023

When we say that we will remember them, let us just pause to think what we understand by that, and how we will remember them.

Yes, we certainly remember all of those people who lost their lives, for the cause of democracy and the resistance to oppression. That was for their own generation, and for all to follow. My parents' generation. Your parents' generation. Yourselves. And future generations.

But I do wonder if any of those who gave their lives in the World Wars were able to be among us today, in 2023, they would look at our world and think that we are remembering them well.

We may have our annual assembly. We may lay our wreaths. We may wear poppies in our clothing. And yet, I speak to you as our daily headlines present a continuing narrative – as they have for well over a year now – of war, conflict, death, and suffering. And the tools of violence and aggression – such as guns, bombs, and combat – feature as the core source of apparent entertainment in films, television, and computer games. Even our democracy is at risk from misinformation, denials, and lies; where information sources of what we see and hear are increasingly distorted, leaving us uncertain as to what we can and should believe any more.

So, when we all say that we will remember them, what does that mean? Because I may suggest that it certainly needs a lot more than a minute's silence once a year and a paper flower in our coats.

The truth of our history is so important. What has happened in our past is not there for retrospective editing or filtering, so that it may feel somehow more comfortable to our present-day and temporary sensibilities. If mistakes and poor decisions were made, we need to know. One of the main purposes of knowing our own history is so that we learn from it. So that we don't repeat the same mistakes. So that we don't repeat the same poor decisions.

Looking at our daily headlines, forgive me for suggesting that we don't appear to be learning from our own history.

I don't speak to you with any illusion that you can go out of this assembly and change the headlines we are reading each day. However, the life that we have as human beings is the life that we make. And each and every one of us is empowered to make it as good as we can.

Peace starts within. In our words. In our behaviour choices. In our actions. If we want Peace in this world, it begins with each one of us, every minute of every day. The more that we role-model a different mindset, attitude, and choice of response; the more it influences others around us. And this is how change in this world takes place.

So, when we say that we will remember them, let it be every day, in our thoughts and in our actions. In the promotion of and advocacy for reason, dialogue, tolerance, understanding, compromise and, ultimately, humanity – that we would not then take the life of another and justify it by some claims of a political or spiritual cause.

Let us be the role-models and influencers for Peace in our world. And then, I may suggest, we will be remembering all of those, whom we honour today, respectfully, meaningfully, and well.